



Natural Resources Conservation Service
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September 7, 2007

PENNSYLVANIA BULLETIN NO. PA360-7-9

SUBJECT: PER – FY 2007 Performance Appraisals and Awards

Purpose: To provide direction to Leadership Team Supervisors regarding the end of FY Individual Performance Ratings and Awards Process.

Please forward this bulletin with the attached important PowerPoint and any other instructions that you need to communicate with your supervisory employees to ensure the instructions are followed and deadlines are met.

Expiration Date: October 30, 2007

Deadlines: *Oct. 10th that require the STC Reviewer signature (2nd line supervisor) on AD-435. October 30th for all completed appraisals, plans and awards information.*

Performance Appraisal Cycle:

The rating period for all employees is October 1, 2006 through September 30, 2007. In most cases, performance plans for Fiscal Year 2007 were effective after October 1, 2006, to allow time for employee performance objectives to be aligned with the NRCS Strategic Plan and the NRCS Business Plan for Fiscal Year 2007 and for the cascading of performance objectives from SES Performance Agreements. Performance standards must have been effective for at least 90 days in order for employees to be rated against these standards.

Performance Ratings:

To close out the 2007 Performance Appraisal Cycle, Rating Officials will need to process performance appraisals by entering results into EmpowHR which will then flow to the National Finance Center (NFC) system. Performance discussions should be held with employees and employee accomplishments should be entered into EmpowHR. Ratings of Record must be entered into the EmpowHR system by Rating Officials and approved by Reviewing Officials. Ratings may not be communicated to employees prior to approval by the Reviewing Official. Rating Officials are reminded not to print or save performance appraisals from the Summary Rating module until they are ready for the information to be forwarded to the Reviewing Official for concurrence. Rating Officials may print information from the Performance Plan or Progress Review menu items to avoid forwarding information prematurely to Reviewing Officials.



Documentation is required for each element on Forms AD-435A and AD-435Bs in which the employee receives a rating of "Exceeds Fully Successful" or "Does Not Meet Fully Successful." Documentation must show how the employee's performance exceeded or failed to meet the fully successful standard. Documentation of accomplishments for elements that are appraised at the "Meets Fully Successful" are encouraged but not required. Documentation of accomplishments for elements that are appraised at the "Meets Fully Successful" are encouraged but not required. Employees will review the summary rating, add comments, if desired, and check the Viewed/Discussed box in EmpowHR.

Performance Ratings:

Summary Ratings for the 2007 Performance Appraisal Cycle are to be entered into EmpowHR. A PowerPoint presentation with step-by-step instructions for processing performance appraisals using EmpowHR is attached to this bulletin and is highly recommended to be viewed due to new updates. You may also contact Lisa Bonafede, Human Resources Manager, at 717-237-2229. Summary Rating information entered prior to September 30, 2007 will not be transmitted to NFC for processing until October 8, 2007.

There are five possible summary rating levels.

- Outstanding - performance of very high quality. Employee produces exceptionally high quality work; employee produces work that is significantly ahead of established schedules or deadlines, and employee completes work with little or no supervision. Performance for each element exceeds the Fully Successful level.
- Superior - performance of unusually good or excellent quality. Employee produces high quality and/or quantity of work ahead of established schedules or deadlines and with less than normal supervision.
- Fully Successful - performance is of good quality. Employee produces the expected quantity and/or quality of work and meets deadlines or schedules for completion of work.
- Marginal - performance needs improvement to achieve the "Meets Fully Successful" level. Employee demonstrates the need for close supervisory review, discussion, and/or correction of work products. Performance does not require that an Opportunity to Improve (OTI) be issued.
- Unacceptable - performance fails to meet established "Meets Fully Successful" performance standards in one or more critical elements of the employee's position. Corrective action is necessary. An OTI must be initiated.

If an employee works under different supervisors during the appraisal period, each supervisor, of 90 days or more, should discuss their comments concerning the employee with the new supervisor for consideration when completing the performance rating.

Awards (Also see attached awards list description for more information)

The attached awards worksheet is to be used by the Technical Centers to ensure that all forms and documentation for those receiving awards ONLY are returned for employees by the deadline of October 30, 2007. Forms are to be returned by employee in Alphabetical order by last name. They should also be listed on the spreadsheet in this order. Form should be submitted in this order with the spreadsheet. Submit all at one time. Again, do not submit these forms for employees who are not receiving awards – we do not need this documentation.

AD-435 – Copy is to be sent to the State Office.

AD-435A – Copy for State Office.

AD-435B(s) – Copy for State Office. This is the write up from the Rating Official documenting the award request. Other memos recommending the award can also be included.

When determining if an employee is going to be given an award, consider the employees rating for each element; consistency of awards given to other employees with similar ratings, and the scope and complexity of the position. Employees who have exceeded the standards for all elements (critical and non-critical) should receive a larger bonus than employees who have exceeded the standards for several of their elements. Another factor to consider is the inherent difficulty of the position. For example, a GS-12 position is inherently more difficult and complex than a GS-6 or 7 position. If the employees are rated the same, the higher graded position should receive a larger award.

Outstanding Performance Awards - Quality Step Increase (QSI) Awards may be granted when an employee's final adjective rating is "outstanding." A QSI may not be appropriate or advantageous to an employee if the employee is about to receive a promotion or vacate his or her position – these determinations will be made at the State level. Employees may receive only one QSI during a 52-week period, and not in conjunction with a Performance Award. Cash in lieu of a QSI can be granted if beneficial to the employee. Human Resources can provide assistance with making a determination.

Superior Performance Awards can vary in dollar amounts depending on grade level and rating of the elements. Human Resources is also available for assistance in determining the appropriate amount.

Fully Successful – minimal award amounts but could include spot awards or extra effort awards.

The 2007-2008 rating period will run from October 1, 2007 through September 30, 2008. More guidance for the 2008 Performance Plan development will be forthcoming. It is recommended that all employees wait until further notice to begin completing next year performance plan.

Should you have any questions regarding the performance appraisal system or need additional guidance on an employee's performance, please contact Lisa Bonafede, HRM, at (717) 237-2229 or Anne Anderson at (717) 237-2143.

/s/ Craig R. Derickson

CRAIG R. DERICKSON
State Conservationist

DIST: TC, LST

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